

CRITICAL DIGEST

August 17, 1953 Vol V No 49 505-5th Ave, NYC T M Kraus \$10 Year LY 9-2826, MU2-0326

The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Theatre Diary

Broadway business has picked up with all 12 current items reporting an increase in business. Top strawhat tryout this week will be St. John Terrell's arena production of Orpheus in the Underworld at his Lambertville, NJ, Music Circus. Additional dialogue and lyrics by Edward Eager have been added to the original book and lyrics by Ring Lardner. A special show bus will leave from Hotel Woodstock, 127 W 43, on August 21 at 6 30 PM.

Strawhat Tryouts

Two summer theatre script debuts were recommended as likely candidates for specialized theatre audiences, while several others of this week's tries were marked down as not having a chance on Broadway or anyplace else. Too Much Amphitryon, produced at Putnam, NY, County Playhouse, was rated by Dash, Women's Wear, as one of the more interesting new plays scouted this season. A satiric version of the tale from mythology by George Maxim Ross it is a lusty play that stops this side of ribaldry. If Broadway blackballs it because there have been too many plays on this tale, then the critic suggests one of the better off Broadway groups should stage it. Make Momma Happy, tried out at Lake Hopatcong, NJ, Summer Theatre, is a natural for American Jewish audiences, okays Holl, Variety. George Baxt's comedy features 3 Yiddish players, Molly Picon, Jacob Kalich and Anna Appel in a warm entertaining comedy in English which is ideally suited for their talents.

Here We Come Gathering, Philip King's new farce which debuted at Dobbs Ferry, NY Playhouse, reveals a laugh here and there, pans Glib, Variety, but predicted that Broadway audiences would give script short shrift. The Man Who Had All the Luck, an early Arthur Miller script written in 1944, is aided by a fine cast and direction at Westhampton Beach, NY, Playhouse, notes Hank, Variety, but a low key last act that doesn't quite climax into the weak and implausible ending ruins the evening... The Three Toed Pony, Sidney Michaels' comedy produced at Stockbridge, Mass, Playhouse, fails, comments Russ, Variety, because the young writer is unable to decide if he wants to be a poet or a playwright. Provocative start bogs down into wordy poetical attempts.

London Report

Carrington, V.C., a courtroom drama by Dorothy and Campbell Christie produced at London's Westminster Theatre, is a thoroughly absorbing drama about the trial of a wartime hero for the theft of regimental funds, praises Watts, Post. Sole complaint is filed against Alce Clunes in the title role who makes the character stiff and a bit priggish. American playgoers, the critic predicts are likely to find the discussions of the court martial trial officers and the procedures pleasantly exotic.

Labeling Chorus Girls

A favorite idea of George Jean Nathan's, which he admits the Critics' Circle always seems to skip at their brief annual meetings, is to number the chorus girls like baseball and football players. Thus critics could easily choose the more talented to praise in print. Though it is highly unlikely this idea is ever adapted it would be interesting to know what the girls think of the plan.

' Village Theatre '

Theatre de Lys will reopen Sept 15 with an adaption of Calder Willingham's End of a Man by the author with an assist from the Actor's Studio. Claire Heller will produce the show downtown. Published in 1947 the novel was banned by the NY Society for the Suppression of Vice, but restored to circulation after a hectic court battle. The Actors Studio last year aided the actor in switching the novel to a play.

Originals Only announces that reservations for One Foot to Sea are now being accepted through Oct 31. Auditions for replacements and for future plays continue on Mondays...Cosmo Dramatists will present 3 one act plays at Amate Theatre 159 Bleecker Aug 21-22. Included are Over Tones by Alice Gerstenberg, The Marriage Proposal by Chekov and The Monkey's Paw by W.W. Jacobs. Admission is free.

' Off Broadway '

The World of Sholom Aleichem, which will re-open at the Barbizon Plaza Sept 11 announces \$31,000 in advance sales. 3 one act plays in English include Morris Carnovsky, Howard da Silva, Jack Gilford and Will Lee.

The American Savoyards, Dorothy Raedler's Gilbert & Sullivan group which played for many years at the Jan Hus House as the Masque & Lyre players, are a big hit this summer at Monmouth, Maine, Fenton, Times, reports. Unlike most first year summer operations, the group's 10 week season will show a profit.

' Vaudeville '

New Palace show headed by Dick Buckley and Milbourne Christopher. With Jimmy Valentine, Johnson & Madill, Sandra, Maxie & Millie, and the Fontaines.

Paramount show okayed by trade paper reporters Gros, Variety and Francis, Billboard, Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing Quintet and Mr. Ballantine shared plaudits.

' The English View '

If only that unknown quantity, the audience didn't have to be pleased, Off Broadway producing would be easier, comments Green, "Theatre World." English critic who has been reporting on Broadway shows for many years believes that without the headache of the audience, Off Broadway theatre workers would have wider scope in which to develop their skills.

For example, the British writer reasons, if a group consisted of experienced, talented actors working under a director with similar qualifications, NEW scripts could be attempted or a bout with the classics would be in order. The latter, he notes, is a field in which the American actor is inadequately trained with the usual dire results whenever he appears in same.

A group of beginning actors, Green suggests, could work their way through the established plays of the American repertoire, thus finding well defined acting parts to explore, giving them much needed security and experience. But audiences, he understates, are notoriously unconcerned about any problems other than their own entertainment.

' Gift Coupon '

Buy theatre wisely. Keep informed the easy way. Weekly newsletter digests NYC theatr reviews, comments, news. Critics ratings Broadway, Off Broadway, & Greenwich Village. Drama books & Drama records. Ticket reports. Compiled by "Broadway In Brief & TV In Brief" columnist, 5th year. \$10 year. 3 gift subscriptions \$25. Including Gift card.

Name.....

Address.....

Subscriber's Name.....

 ' Green Room Department '

DENIAL WEEK...Two Broadway producers formally denied rumors that were growing into news stories. Lee Shubert denied that the Shuberts were negotiating with the Department of Justice to settle the Department of Justice's anti-trust suit which has been pending since 1950, Zolotow, Times, reports. The producer said they would fight the charges in court. Variety had heard that the Shuberts had agreed to divest themselves of virtually all of their out of town theatre holdings as the price for the government's dropping part of their charges. Billy Rose may or may not take over Jones Beach Marine Theatre next season, depending upon which columns you read. Rose denied the rumors, while Todd is still silent on reports that he wants to give up the NY State project next year.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...The Arena Guild of America, which packages complete productions for arena theatres for 5% of the gross, is the panacea for the declining out of town theatre, cheers Cahn, Host...A major trouble with the theatre, comments Wilson, Columbus Dispatch, is that too many stars are exclusively Broadway stars, and aren't interested in touring...Criticism fright is a main factor why new playwrights don't rush to try for a second hit, George Axelrod, 7 Year Itch author admits in a Sunday Herald Tribune article. The writer who finds himself suddenly great, discovers he has much to lose if his 2nd try don't equal his 1st hit. There is no middle ground in this all or nothing game.

ADD ADAMS OBITS...When an actor dies, his death is not quite like that of other people, points out Burr, Playbill. When an actor dies, many others die with him. With Maude Adams went her Chanticleer, her Joan of Arc, her Lady Babbie and her Peter Pan. With her too went the last nostalgic wisps of a long past and great theatrical era.

TALENT TIPS...Actors Equity answer as to how "World Citizen" Garry Davis could be playing in a strawhat production of Stalag 17 is very simple, reports McCord, Herald Tribune. Although Davis gave up his American citizenship in 1948, he remained a resident member of the actors' union...If no one writes a good play for Billie Burke, Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun, and George Jean Nathan should write one, suggests the former columnist...2 of "My 3 Angels" are acting anything but, hears Sylvester, News.

DRAMA DESK NOTES...Rice, Post, is home from hospital...Freedley, Morning Telegram, is a patient at Medical Arts Center Hospital...Sylvester, News, is continuing his "Dream Street" column subbing for the vacationing Walker...O'Connor, Journal American, is subbing for the vacationing Sobol...Watts, Post, has returned from vacation in London and Paris...Women's Wear has added a night drama desk to cover late theatre news...Francis, Billboard, is on vacation...First meeting of "Drama Desk", NY Theatre reporters and editors organization, is set for Sept 14.

 ' Pros & Cons by TMK '

"Main Street to Broadway", Lester Cowan's film made in association with the Council of the Living Theatre, had 2 strikes against it from the start. No one could make a film that would encourage people to go to the theatre. The best any film can do is to encourage fans to

see another film. All the preview comment so far has been on the "con" side. The answer to renewing the theatre habit can not be found in films or lower taxes. An all industry supported promotion campaign run by a professional public relations outfit could start to make theatre going as much a national habit as pop-corn.

* NYC Theatre News Round Up *

The Broadway theatre booking jam has arrived. Though usually there are no problems in housing incoming NY shows until December, the comparative prosperity of Broadway this summer, which kept a dozen musicals and plays running through the hot spell, has resulted in the booking of all available houses for September and October openings. Even with the return of the Longacre, the Avon and the Belesco from TV, there still are more shows being readied for fall production than there are houses to be booked. As a result the first controversy of the season has developed.

The producers of Late Love, the Rosemary Casey comedy about the loves of a lady book illustrator with Arlene Francis and Alexander Knox, and the producers of Escapade, Roger MacDougall's London hit comedy about the problems of youth and the UN which will mark the debut here of Ursula Jeans, both believe they have booked the 48th St Theatre for their openings. The former signed to open October 13, while the latter plans a November 6 opening. Now there seems to be a matter of opinion if the first contract was legal. This is the first of many such disputes which will have to be settled this season. Like others, it may settle itself if the 1st show is a flop.

People

Marlon Brando, who just finished his summer Arms and the Man tour, was refused a passport for his planned overseas trip. He has lost 4 previous passports, and the Washington officials don't want to give a chance to lose a 5th... Burton Lane has been signed to do the By The Beautiful Sea score... Florence Henderson will make her Broadway debut in Oklahoma in the lead role she played on tour last season.

Theatre Film Notes

3 D version of Top Banana starring Phil Silvers was made in 5 days in LA as scheduled, but the expected budget of \$300,00 was doubled because of what the producers call "unexpected expenses." The Paula Stone-Mike Sloane production is now playing the NYC Subway Circuit with Joey Faye in the Silvers role... Rose Marie is being filmed for the 3rd time. The current version is now being shot at Mammoth Lake in the High Sierras. The MGM film stars Ann Blyth, Fernando Lamas and Howard Keel... The Tempest will be filmed with an all star English cast including Robert Donat, Alec Guinness, Peter Ustinov and Claire Bloom.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Network TV and radio broadcasts are being planned in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of David Belesco, the noted manager-producer who was born in San Francisco July 25, 1853... "Broadway TV Theatre" will return to WOR TV Sept 14 at 7 30 presenting the same play nightly for a week. Producer is trying to get summer packages and their stars. Plans also are underway for touring the companies to other TV cities.

Theatre Book Notes

"Five Plays by Edmund Wilson" will be published by Farrar, Straus & Young next season... "My 3 Angels" was published by Random House... "Charles, the Great" is the title assigned by Kurt Singer for his biography of Charles Laughton.

Theatre Obits

Sam Guttenberg, 84, retired president of the country's oldest costuming house, Louis Guttenberg's Sons, died at his home in Lawrence, NY. The companies NY warehouses contain over 100,000 costumes.

